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SUBJECT: SOUTH AFRICAN ENVIRONMENT, SCIENCE, AND TECHNOLOGY MONTHLY BRIEFINGS, MAY 2007

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11. (U) Summary: This is the South African Environment, Science and Technology Monthly Briefings newsletter, May 2007, Volume 2, Number 2, prepared by the U.S. Embassy Pretoria, South Africa.

Topics of the newsletter:

- South Africa's Top CO2 Emitters in Carbon Disclosure Program
- Department of Minerals and Energy Challenged Over Mining Licenses
- Canned Lion Hunting Law Reform Postponed
- SA Changes Name of World Heritage Site
- DME Proposes Green Tax on Heavy Polluting Sports Vehicles
- South Africans Encouraged to Embrace Greening Campaign
- SA Celebrates National Science Week

End Summary.

SOUTH AFRICA'S TOP CO2 EMITTERS IN CARBON DISCLOSURE PROGRAM

12. (U) Leading South African companies will participate in a carbon disclosure program (CDP). CDP, launched by the UK in 2000, is designed to determine the impact of business on the environment. According to findings already submitted, business contributes to climate change through greenhouse gases emitted during different working processes. South African coal companies are beginning to find it more difficult to penetrate European coal markets. Some European authorities argue that coal imported from South Africa, relative to other import sources, tends to be higher in oxide and carbon dioxide emissions when burned. The EU's Large Combustion Plant Directive, which limits nitrogen oxides and sulphur dioxide emissions, could also pose significant problems for South African coal exports. Some studies report that South African carbon dioxide (CO2) production has increased significantly from 1980 to 2004, with South Africa now ranking higher than Brazil which has four times South Africa's production. The World Resource Institute estimated South Africa's CO2 production at 417 million tons for 2000, making South Africa the world's 19th largest emitter of the gas.

DEPARTMENT OF MINERALS AND ENERGY CHALLENGED OVER MINING LICENSES

13. (U) The Mpumalanga Lake District Protection Group (MLDPG) has instituted legal proceedings to stop proposed open-pit coal mining in the Lake District of Mpumalanga, even though the Department of

Minerals and Energy (DME) previously issued mining licenses to the prospective investors. Local communities and the MLDPG fear that an open-pit coal mine jeopardizes the indigenous species and the ecosystem in the area. MLDPG argues that no proper environmental impact assessment (EIA) was conducted, and that an EIA would have clearly indicated the environmental and social impacts of coal mining. University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) geoscientist Terrence McCarthy noted that mine areas normally become permanently "sterilized" and that the ground water becomes contaminated, destroying the cave, lake and pan habitats of indigenous birds, frogs and other living organisms in the area. The Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT) stated that it could not get involved because DME owns the mining rights, has the power to issue mining licenses, and has the authority to regulate its own EIA. The court case will determine whether DME prevails.

CANNED LION HUNTING LAW REFORM POSTPONED

14. (U) Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism Marthinus Van Schalkwyk announced that the effective date for the Protected Species Regulations (which will govern canned lion hunting) has been postponed from June 1, 2007 to February 1, 2008. Van Schalkwyk's decision was prompted by concerns raised by Provincial Environment Ministers who had complained that they could not enforce the regulations without more time to prepare. The proposed regulations would regulate canned predator hunting and would prohibit hunting captive-bred predators within two years of their release into a game farm for the purpose of hunting. North West Agriculture, Conservation and Environment Minister Mandlinkosi Mayisela welcomed Van Schalkwyk's postponement of the implementation date. He said the delay gave the provincial authorities time to "engage further in discussions with the National Minister, with the hope of striking a favorable compromise." Mayisela noted that over 350 lions are hunted each year in North West province alone. In the intervening months before the effective date, DEAT will hold countrywide information sessions to ensure that the public and all other stakeholders are informed about the new regulations and prepared to

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implement them on February 1, 2008. DEAT encouraged interested parties to apply for licenses or permits to avoid an unnecessary backlog on the effective date. The new regulations were developed in terms of the National Environmental Management Biodiversity Act 10 of 2004.

SA CHANGES NAME OF WORLD HERITAGE SITE

15. (U) Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT) Marthinus Van Schalkwyk announced in May the change of the name of one of South Africa's World Heritage Sites, from the Greater St. Lucia Wetlands Park to iSimangaliso Wetlands Park. iSimangaliso, a Zulu word meaning amazement or miracle, was chosen from 60 other proposed names. The cabinet approved the name change. Selection of a new name involved an extensive consultation process, including public meetings, advertisements in the newspapers, radio and TV, and circulation of 10,000 briefing documents to the community at large. According to the Minister, the consultations took about two years, and there was an overwhelming consensus from the majority of the participants for a more descriptive name in one of the indigenous languages.

DME PROPOSES GREEN TAX ON HEAVY POLLUTING SPORTS VEHICLES

16. (U) Department of Minerals and Energy (DME) Director of Energy Efficiency Dr. Elsa Du Toit reported that the DME is considering the introduction of a 33 percent tax on the selling price for SUVs, and a doubling of the their annual license fees. Du Toit said the funds from these taxes and fees would be used to mitigate the environmental degradation caused by SUVs. She also hoped the higher selling price and fees would reduce the purchases of SUVs to 12 percent of the market by 2015. Thus far, higher fuel prices and escalating bank interest rates have not discouraged the South African market for SUVs. Du Toit said that since market forces are not working to reduce SUV purchases, South Africa must now follow the world trend of imposing punitive measures to enforce behavioral change in people. DME official reports indicate that SUVs consume

double the amount of fuel of an ordinary sedan, and emit 9,000kg of carbon dioxide compared to the 4,500kg of the lighter cars. If DME endorses the "energy efficiency levy", a vehicle that costs \$119,700 could have an additional tax of \$39,400, plus a 100 percent levy on the annual license fees. Environmental activist groups welcome DME's proposal to establish the green tax, while automotive industry economists argue that the levy is too steep and could put some jobs at risk.

SOUTH AFRICANS ENCOURAGED TO EMBRACE GREENING CAMPAIGN

¶7. (U) Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT) Marthinus Van Schalkwyk urged individual South Africans, businesses and industries to adopt and embrace environmental activism during the launch of South Africa's national environmental campaign known as "Indalo Yethu" (Our Environment). Indalo Yethu CEO JP Louw said that the campaign's primary purpose was to arouse "eco-activism" and to advocate greening big projects such as housing, transportation and the 2010 World Cup Soccer tournament. The campaign encourages project developers to introduce energy and water saving technologies as well as to reduce pollution and waste. Louw said that the Indalo Yethu campaign logo (a butterfly draped in the colors of the SA national flag) would be awarded to complying companies, while a "green tax" may be imposed on non-compliers. According to Louw, the campaign will involve a series of education and awareness projects, including a nationwide tour of former U.S. Vice President Al Gore's documentary film on climate change, "An Inconvenient Truth."

¶8. (U) The Department of Science and Technology (DST) celebrated the National Science Week (NSW) May 12-19, 2007. NSW was designed to help make science accessible and attractive to youth, educators, women, and previously disadvantaged communities. Few South African students currently enroll in math, science and technology in schools and tertiary institutions. NWS attempted to encourage students to pursue careers in science engineering and technology, and to highlight the important roles those professions play in daily life. NSW included interactive exhibitions, science shows, workshops and broad education and entertainment. DST official Lebs Mphahlele said this year's event, entitled, "Tomorrow's Science and Technology are in Our Youths' Hands," was planned to ensure that activities were relevant to the areas where people lived. NSW had two sub-themes: Indigenous Knowledge Systems and promoting science activities in areas where South Africa clearly has knowledge and geographic advantage. NSW activities will be celebrated in all nine provinces at 43 centers. The NSW program is on the third leg of a five-year program designed to run until 2009.

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